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BC-COUP-PROFILE 8 PARIS

FRANCE HAS HELPED WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY AND IN THE SPHERE OF BROADCASTING AND HEALTH.

IN JUNE, 1971, PRESIDENT BOKASSA SURPRISED PEOPLE IN MANY AFRICAN COUNTRIES BY ANNOUNCING THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED TO RECOGNIZE SOUTH AFRICA AS A STATE.

HE SAID THE DECISION HAD BEEN TAKEN BECAUSE NOBODY -- NEITHER THE UNITED NATIONS NOR THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY -- HAD FOUND A SOLUTION TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN PROBLEM.

THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC WOULD HAVE LINKED ITSELF WITH THOSE STATES WHO WERE READY TO GO TO WAR AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA TO LIBERATE ITS BLACK POPULATION.

"BUT AS THAT HAS SHOWN ITSELF TO BE IMPOSSIBLE, THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC HAS CHOSEN THE WAY OF FRIENDSHIP WITH SOUTH AFRICA," HE ADDED.

JEAN BEDEL BOKASSA WAS BORN ON FEBRUARY 22, 1921, IN THE VILLAGE OF BOBANGUI, 50 MILES (80 KILOMETERS) FROM BANGUI, THE CAPITAL OF CENTRAL AFRICA. HIS UNCLE, BARTHELEMY BOGANDA, BORN IN THE SAME VILLAGE, BECAME THE FOUNDER OF THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC.

MORE 048

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY NLS DATE 12/21/82
RDS☐ or XDS☐ EXT. DATE
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EXCISE EXEMPTIONS ☐
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RELEASE DENIED
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BC-COUP-PROFILE 9 PARIS

IN 1927, JEAN BEDEL'S FATHER, INDOGOU M'GOUNDOULOU, WAS MURDERED AND HIS MOTHER DIED SOON AFTERWARDS, LEAVING 12 ORPHAN CHILDREN.

THE YOUNG BOKASSA AND HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS WERE RAISED AT FIRST BY THEIR GRANDFATHER UNTIL JEAN BEDEL WAS SENT TO A SCHOOL RUN BY ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES.

THE FUTURE EMPEROR BECAME A FERVENT CATHOLIC AND CONSIDERED ENTERING THE PRIESTHOOD. BUT INSTEAD HE JOINED THE FRENCH ARMY ON THE EVE OF WORLD WAR II IN 1939.

BOKASSA FINISHED THE WAR A SERGEANT MAJOR AFTER LANDING WITH GENERAL CHARLES DE GAULLE'S FREE FRENCH FORCES IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE.

THE FRENCH MADE HIM A MEMBER OF THE LEGION OF HONOR AND AWARDED HIM THE CROIX DE GUERRE.

MORE 0650